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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE
INFO : GEORGETOWN, THE HAGUE

Guyana/Suriname B'dry

FROM : Amconsul PARAMARIBO

DATE: December 21, 1967

SUBJECT : Incident in Border Area in Dispute Between Surinam and Guyana

REF : Paramaribo 0186 *NC*

On or about December 13 armed Guyana policemen appeared at a hydrographic metering post operated by Surinam employees of the Waterpower Bureau in the southwestern disputed area, stated the Surinamers were in Guyanese territory and told them to pack up and leave, saying they would return at a later date to verify their departure. The location of this incident is at or near the confluence of the Oronoque Creek and the river called "Upper Corantyne" on Surinam maps but "Niewe" on other maps, including those issued by the Department. The west bank of the Corantyne River constitutes the agreed boundary between Surinam and Guyana. The crux of the dispute in the southwestern area is what stream forms a part there of the Corantyne system.

The Surinam Government immediately brought the matter to the attention of the Netherlands Foreign Office and, we are informed, Minister LUNG made inquiry of the Guyana High Commissioner in London concerning the incident.

Surinam officials profess puzzlement at the Guyanese action, noting that the installation in question is only a water gauge which is visited periodically to take readings and which has been in place for a considerable period of time. The general opinion seems to be that this incident must be construed as a Guyanese reaction to the recent visit of Minister-President PENGEL to Caracas (A-41). *Per 7 Sur En*

The local press on December 19 carried an item from Georgetown stating that in well informed circles there it was assumed that there would be a meeting shortly between Minister-President Pengel and Prime Minister BURNHAM with a view to preventing relations between the two countries from deteriorating. Pengel was reported as having stated in the Staten that such a meeting was not out of the question, adding that in his opinion

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Guyana had made a serious blunder and that the Surinam Government intended to take all measures to determine the question once and for all whether the area in question was Surinam territory or not. (Although this is a matter within the reserved area of foreign affairs, the Netherlands Government has delegated authority to Surinam to carry on discussions with Guyana concerning border matters.)

The incident has been played in low key in the press thus far and is discussed in official circles without heat or bombast. Nevertheless there is complete unanimity within the various political parties and the population in general with respect to what is considered the validity of Surinam claims in the disputed area. Judging from the Guyana Graphic, which arrives here on a delayed basis, the Guyana press is giving the incident much more play than is the case with the Surinam press.

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